

The Story
of the
World Council
of Peace

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This pamphlet tells the story of the World Council of Peace. At the moment there is great interest in the work of the Council because it has taken the initiative in calling the CONGRESS FOR GENERAL DISARMAMENT AND PEACE being held in Moscow in July 1962. The actual organisation of this Congress is in the hands of a Committee fully representative of all the various tendencies for disarmament and peace throughout the world including the World Council of Peace. The World Council of Peace is proud of the part it has played in creating a world movement capable of asserting the demand for total disarmament and peaceful coexistence. This brief review of its work is presented in the hope that it will add to the understanding of the issues involved and the need for more vigorous and more united action.

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The Story of the World Council of Peace

The World Council of Peace was created by the people as their answer to the threat of a new world war. It came into being when men and women first began to realise that though the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were hardly cold and thousands of devastated cities and towns were still in ruins, preparations were being made for another holocaust, and this time with atomic weapons threatening unimaginable destruction.

Through the years, the World Council of Peace has brought into action ever broader sections of the people, as the truth became clearer that the whole human race is in deadly peril. In moments of acute crisis—and there have been many—the Council was able to alert public opinion to the danger, but it has done more; it has mobilised hundreds of millions in an active day to day struggle for peace.

A movement to match the danger

During the Berlin crisis of 1948 to 1949 when (as we now know from published documents) the world was very near to war, the first moves were made to build a peace movement to match the danger. A group of writers, scientists and other leading men and women from countries both East and West, and including the Soviet Union and the United States, met at Wroclaw in Poland. They underlined the dangers resulting from the increasing tension between East and West, called

for organised struggle for peace and urged the setting up of groups of 'defenders of peace' throughout the world. At about the same time a national peace conference was held in New York while in the summer of 1948 a similar conference was held in Britain.

Then came the call for the first World Peace Congress in Paris in 1949. This was a lead the world was waiting for. The response was immediate and overwhelming. Within a few weeks, the people were in action in 72 countries. More than 11,000 organisations pledged support. No less than 2,200 delegates were chosen to attend the Congress and money collected for their fares.

In some quarters, the spontaneous support for the Congress and the enthusiasm it aroused were not welcomed and many delegates from Socialist countries were refused visas by the French authorities. So, for those unable to travel to Paris, a simultaneous Congress was held in Prague.

Keynote action

The keynote of these Congresses was action. The speeches were not just warnings of the danger of war, but an insistence that the people must fashion the means to impose upon the governments their demand for peace. And throughout the Congresses ran the theme that the resources of the world must be devoted to repairing the desolation of war, and creating an abundant life for all.

The resolution of this first Congress expressed firm support for the Charter of the United Nations, opposed military alliances, called for the banning of atomic weapons, demanded the limitation of armed forces, with controls, and declared its devotion to the causes of national independence and peaceful cooperation. Professor Joliot Curie was elected the first president. His appointment was not only a tribute to a life's work for progressive causes, but epitomised in a very real way the duty of the scientists to use the new resources available to mankind for peaceful production and

not for war. Professor Joliot Curie pioneered the conversion of the products of uranium fission for the production of energy. He was the High Commissioner for Atomic Energy of France and later was ousted from his post in 1950 because he would not move from his principle of 'atoms for peace and not for war'.

First steps in the Peace Race

The Peace Race, which the world is talking about today, began in Paris and Prague thirteen years ago. The vision of a World Without War with resources devoted to peaceful progress, which a United Nations Committee has now put before the world, was glimpsed by the delegates to these first Congresses.

A World Committee was elected in Paris to coordinate the activities of the various movements. On March 19, 1950, this World Committee met in Stockholm and launched the historic Stockholm Appeal calling for the absolute prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction, with strict international controls to ensure the observance of the ban. A call was made to peace workers everywhere to collect signatures to the appeal. Here was a simple action which all could share and again the result showed how eagerly the people were waiting for an opportunity to do something for peace. The proportion of the population supporting the appeal varied from country to country, for in some, governments gave public support, in others they were hostile. But hardly a country failed to provide some of the 500 million signatures collected. There were cases from Fascist-ruled countries where men and woman collected signatures at the risk of imprisonment. Even in some democratic countries in the West, the peace workers were criticised on the ground that the plan to ban the bomb was designed to weaken the West, because at that time America was said to have the monopoly of the bomb.

The campaign for the Stockholm Appeal can truly be

said to have created a landmark in human history. This was a new movement of people, brought into being to counter a peril greater than any known in the past. Because it was a struggle for life it was as broad as mankind itself. In the intervening years, new movements have come into being, each making its special contribution to the universal cause. The committees set up at that time and linked since with the World Council of Peace, have continued to fulfil their particular role, formulating their own actions to deal with the dangers and seeking to inspire others to wider and more united efforts.

Eleven years after the Stockholm Appeal was launched, the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. History has proved how right was this first world action by the world peace movement and how much humanity has lost because the governments failed to act.

The Second World Peace Congress was held in Warsaw from November 16 to 22, 1950. This Congress was planned to take place in Sheffield, England, but the British authorities turned back many delegates and refused visas to others, so it had to be transferred to Poland. It was here that the decision was taken to give the movement a more permanent constitution and the World Council of Peace came into being. The first members of the Council were elected by the Congress on the recommendation of National Committees or of the World Committee. The members of the Council, with Professor Joliot-Curie as president, were drawn from all parts of the world, including leading men and women from science, culture, industry, politics, and active workers from the rank and file.

Some, like Professor Joliot-Curie and many others who spent their last years fervently striving for peace, have died. Some have fallen out. But always more have come in to take their places. Today the Chairman of the Presidential Committee is Professor J. D. Bernal, the famous British scientist.

This was how the Congress defined the work of the new Council:

“Any people, any group, and body inspired by peace-loving ideas, willing to work for the realisation of one or another of the proposals for peace drawn up by the World Congress has a place in the World Council of Peace and can send its representatives to the Council. Therefore the World Council of Peace is mandated by the World Congress to welcome the representatives of all forces engaged in practical activities for peace.”

What has been achieved?

Looking back over the years since the Council was set up, what has been achieved?

The arms race still goes on. The stockpiles of nuclear weapons are now so great that they could destroy whole countries and end civilised life on our planet. The differences between the powers are still far from being resolved. Disarmament is still no more than a hope.

And yet, on the credit side, there is much to record. The acceptance by the United Nations in November 1961 of the principles laid down in the Stockholm Appeal was no accident. The fact that the whole world talks today about disarmament is due in no small measure to the way the people have made the abolition of all weapons the focal point of their struggle. No government, no statesman today can be unaware of this universal demand for an end to the terror of the bomb or refuse to pay at least lip service to disarmament. The voice of the people demanding peace is today a major factor in world affairs.

Peace — Freedom — Dignity

Through the years the World Council has sought to give a clear and simple lead on the way public opinion can focus attention and bring pressure on governments on the burning

problems of the day. The Stockholm Appeal alerted the peoples to the imminent danger of an arms race based on weapons of mass extermination. When wars actually broke out in Korea and Indochina, the call of the World Council was to stop the fighting and for the statesmen to meet and agree. When the arms race entered a new and more dangerous phase with the plans to re-arm Western Germany, the World Council insistently warned that this would permanently divide Europe and immeasurably increase the danger of war. The World Council insisted as an elementary fact of our century that the liberation of peoples from colonial exploitation is an essential condition of a peaceful world. And liberation is the right not only of people under colonial occupation but also of those whose natural resources are in the hands of foreign governments and foreign financial interests whose economic domination makes a mockery of national independence. Many people, in countries like the United States, which fought their own war of liberation, understood this aspect of the Council's work, even though they reject some of its other ideas.

During these years there have been threats of war. Governments and political leaders have threatened to use the bomb. But the bomb has not been used. General MacArthur demanded permission to drop it in the Korean War. Mr. Foster Dulles visited London and Paris in an effort to secure support for plans to use it to save the French colonial forces in Indochina. But public opinion, alerted to the danger and expressing itself particularly among America's allies, said no.

The attempt to deny the Egyptian people the right to control the canal through their territory led to a war of aggression by Britain, France and Israel—a war that was stopped by the pressure of world opinion and the actions of states opposing the aggression.

In Africa, the murder of Patrice Lumumba and the martyrdom of other Congo patriots were directly caused by

the efforts to maintain the exploitation of the country's rich mineral resources.

In Cuba, the determination of the people to plan their own resources led to an attempt to overthrow their government by intervention from without. In Vietnam and other parts of Asia, war dangers grow, but there is a greater awareness of the danger and the need for action.

The United States still insists, in face of world opinion, in excluding China from her rightful place in the United Nations and retaining the membership of the puppet government in Taiwan. But everyone knows that this travesty cannot go on.

Pin-pointing the danger spots

In the succeeding years, there were Congresses at Helsinki and Stockholm, meetings of the World Council in New Delhi, Colombo, Berlin and other centres. Declarations were issued by the World Council Bureau and Presidential Committee, putting forward practical proposals to deal with the danger spots to peace—the call for struggle against the rearmament of Western Germany with its open threats to the German Democratic Republic and the countries to the East, the need for zones of disengagement in the danger spots, the mounting peril from the military blocs, the military and reserve bases in the territories of other countries and the arms race.

Looking back over the twelve years' work of the Council, it is possible to see how valuable has been this ability to reflect world opinion and to formulate policies meeting the needs of the situation. Like the first Stockholm Appeal many of these ideas were at first opposed or declared impracticable. But time proved they were right. It was the Congress of Peoples for Peace in Vienna which in December of 1952 called for an end to the wars in Korea and Indochina and demanded that the five great powers, the USA and USSR, China, Britain and France should meet and agree. On this

demand representatives from 85 nations with many participants from peace movements not linked with the World Council, were unanimous. Millions, however, while sympathetic, thought of it as an idle hope. But the Conference did meet. China, though still barred from the United Nations, took part. Peace in Indochina was secured. But before this victory the demand of Vienna had been translated into a second signature campaign. Six hundred million signed.

Essential prerequisite for peace — disarmament

Finally, as one looks back over these dangerous yet fruitful years, one sees how the idea of total and complete disarmament emerges as the essential prerequisite for peace. In a world capable of destroying itself, all armaments must be abolished.

The World Council has always inspired its supporters to give active backing to every action for peace. The older peace organisations, many of them based on religious and pacifist convictions, have played and are still playing an important part, and the World Council and the National Committees have sought the closest possible cooperation.

During these years since the World Council of Peace was created, new organisations opposing nuclear weapons and demanding peaceful solutions have come into being. Some have approached the war danger from a more specific angle than the World Council. The Campaign against A and H Bombs in Japan created a movement of millions, expressing the universal horror of a people which was the first victim of the bomb and which suffered the first casualties from the tests. In Britain, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament created a broad front against the bomb and the manufacture and stockpiling of these weapons by the British Government. The Aldermaston marches set a pattern for the world. The Committee of 100 evolved the technique of the "sitdown" for peace. More recently the women and the students in America and Britain have created new movements and

brought in new forces. Many of these active workers would disagree with views on world affairs expressed by the World Council. But they demand peace and are prepared to work for its achievement. We salute them as our allies in the cause of peace.

The Council represents peoples, not governments. That means that participants at the meetings of the World Council could speak in some cases in the knowledge that they had the full support of their people and their government. Others had to speak with the knowledge that their ideas were opposed by their government and by a considerable proportion of their people. There was another category, where the spokesmen at the peace meetings were far more representative than their governments. These were the men and women who came from countries still under colonial oppression or countries where so-called independent governments were completely subservient politically and economically to the imperialist countries.

What sort of a world does the movement look forward to? There are within the movement hundreds of different ideas about the way to deal with political and economic problems, but there is agreement on three main principles:

1. The different social systems in the world can coexist peacefully.
2. Differences between the nations must be settled by negotiations and agreements acceptable to all.
3. All peoples have the inalienable right to national independence and sovereignty and the internal affairs of each nation must be solely its own concern.

Humanity in action for peace

Just as many other organisations have shared in the creation of a world movement for peace, so we are finding that in various ways and with different emphasis, these principles are winning acceptance.

In 1952, the Council was invited to take part in an Economic Conference in Moscow which discussed fostering trade between all countries and particularly between the socialist and capitalist groups. Largely on the insistence of the United States, embargoes are still imposed on this trade, but businessmen are breaking through the barriers. Co-existence is good for them too. They are allies in the struggle for peace.

Among leaders and members of the world's religions, peace has become a burning issue. Many have taken part in the various Congresses and are represented on the World Council. The World Council of Churches, representing many Christian denominations, met recently in New Delhi and passed resolutions on peace and disarmament very similar to those of the World Council of Peace.

Scientists, who bear a special responsibility in this nuclear age, have built a bridge between East and West. Their work is associated with Pugwash, the small town in Nova Scotia where their first conference was held, attended by American, Soviet, Chinese, Japanese, British scientists and representatives from many other countries. These conferences put forward expert evidence to prove that disarmament can be achieved.

Women are becoming more and more convinced of their special role in the struggle. And they have created their own movement in many countries and are working together in the international field. The young people, particularly the students, are in action. The new generation is not content to leave its future in the hands of statesmen who still talk of peace resting on nuclear terror.

Medical men, artists, writers, architects, trade unionists and many other groups have called international conferences to assert their demand for peace as the first condition for the success of their work.

Regional conferences have been held in every continent to discuss the special problems facing the people in these areas.

Every year, the World Council selects a list of anniversaries of great men and women and encourages the people in every country to honour the memory of those who, through the centuries, have made a rich contribution to the cultural heritage of mankind.

Here, in a host of ways, we see humanity in action for peace. When these basic conditions for peace have been won, many problems will remain. Peaceful coexistence will not freeze the world into an existing pattern. Peoples will still assert their right to choose their way of life and decide how they wish to build the future. That is the condition of life. But war and the preparation for war are the negation of life.

For those working for peace, there can be no question of failure. The aim is to end war forever and in so doing to preserve the rich heritage of the past and to ensure the infinite promise of the future.



The Congress for General Disarmament and Peace in Moscow will make another step forward towards this goal. In the early years of the struggle it was necessary to convince people of the danger. Today, the whole human race understands the deadly peril in which it lives. The need is to convince men and women everywhere that they personally can do something towards achieving disarmament and building a peaceful world. Solutions can be found, however acute the divisions between the powers and however great the practical difficulties. The World Council of Peace stands today as it has done since its foundation on the principle that the majority of mankind can impose its demand for peace and can replace a world crippled by the arms race, by a world of abundance.

Members of the Presidential Committee of the World Council of Peace

Professor John D. Bernal,
Chairman, Presidential Committee,
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Fellow of the Royal Society
Physicist
Professor of Crystallography
London University

Mr. Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie,
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Former Government Minister
Former Deputy
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Mrs. Isabelle Blume,
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Mr. Damatang Camara,
Republic of Guinea
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Professor Leopold Infeld,

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Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National
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Former General Secretary of the Congress Party

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Poet and novelist

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Brazil
Deputy
Former Senator
Banker
Former President of the Interparliamentary Union

What is the World Council of Peace?

The World Council of Peace was set up at the Second World Peace Congress in 1950 as "a body embracing representatives of all peoples of the world, those within the United Nations and those not yet represented therein, and also countries still dependent and colonial".

Its aim is to unite the efforts of all people, groups, bodies inspired by peace-loving ideas. It is "mandated by the World Congress to welcome the representatives of all forces engaged in practical activity for peace."

The whole basis of the Council's work is voluntary. It is supported by contributions and donations from national peace movements and individuals. It maintains a World Peace Fund account...

The World Council of Peace receives support in its work from National Peace Committees in some eighty countries, which decide their own attitudes towards decisions, appeals and recommendations of the Council and apply its policies and appeals for action in the ways most suited to their own circumstances.

The World Council of Peace is in contact with many other peace groups throughout the world, through correspondence, informal discussions, joint actions on specific issues and cooperates closely with the International Institute for Peace in Vienna. Through its Bulletin, Information Letter and Press Release, it publicises all activities for peace.

The World Council of Peace consists of about 500 individual members, of the most varied political and religious affiliations and nationalities. These are nominated by National Peace Committees and elected at World Peace Congresses, which are held every three or four years.

The Council elects a Presidential Committee (present members listed overleaf). Professor J. D. Bernal, FRS, its Chairman, has an office in London, at 94 Charlotte Street, W. 1.

Congresses and sessions of the World Council of Peace and its Presidential Committee have been held in various cities, including Rome, Paris, Stockholm, London, Prague, Warsaw, Geneva, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Vienna, Oslo, Berlin, Budapest, Colombo, New Delhi, Moscow, Bucharest.

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